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Japan

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

"Traceability" JAS Mark Under Development May Benefit Local Producers

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Report Highlights:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has targeted 2004 as the year they will develop a certification system to provide consumers with traceability for all agricultural products. The voluntary traceability mark will apply to all products except domestic beef, where it is currently mandatory. Local producers are likely to use the program to differentiate their products from imports. The details of this announcement can be seen in Japan Agrinfo Newsletter (Vol. 21 No. 7 March 2004) available below and on the Japan International Agricultural Council website at http://www.jiac.or.jp/agrinfo/0403_2.htm#12.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Tokyo [JA1]
[JA]

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) is expanding their "traceability" system for agricultural products to include all agricultural products. Although the JAS mark for beef is mandatory, for other products it will remain voluntary. While the labeling requirement will be voluntary, local producers are likely to use it to differentiate their product from imports, which will have a more difficult time meeting traceability requirements.

Responding consumer concerns as a result of a recent finding of BSE in Japan, in December 2003, MAFF introduced a "traceability" system under which quality "JAS" mark was required on retail Japanese beef to "certify" the production history.

This mandatory system for beef will be expanded in 2004, on a voluntary basis, for all agricultural products. The Japan Agrinfo Newsletter (Vol. 21 No. 7 March 2004) published the following article, available online at http://www.jiac.or.jp/agrinfo/0403_2.htm#12.

Begin Article:

MAFF to Issue JAS Mark for Agricultural Products With Accurate and Clear Production History

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) aims to introduce a new system that will give government certification to agricultural products whose production history is accurately recorded and displayed, by 2005. MAFF will establish new standards under the Japanese Standard of Agricultural and Forestry Products system and issue a "certification mark" applicable to all agricultural products, with a view to making it easier for consumers to judge the safety of foods in the store. The move anticipates the opening up of the Japanese market as a result of future FTAs (free trade agreements), aiming to enhance the competitiveness domestic agricultural products.

In December 2003, MAFF introduced a system under which the JAS mark is awarded only to beef whose production history is accurately recorded and clearly displayed.

The proposed new system in principle applies to all agricultural products including rice, fruit, vegetables, beans & pulses. Major retailers and distributors already display the production history of vegetables, etc. in store, but standards vary considerably between companies. MAFF has judged it necessary to make it clear to consumers that the information disclosed is adequate and accurate. A universal standard is to be drawn up by the end of 2004.

The minimum requirement for the issue of the certification mark will be that consumers should be able to enter an ID number displayed on the product package into an in-store terminal and check production history details such as name of producer, address of farm, dates of harvest and shipping, and agricultural chemicals and fertilizers used.

Retailers and producers wishing to display the mark will apply to government-registered private-sector certifying organizations (foundations and NPOs). MAFF will impose penalties for improper acquisition of the mark. MAFF will publish the names of any producers or distributors who fail to comply with instructions to take remedial action and impose fines of up to 100 million yen.

As with beef, imported agricultural products that satisfy the standards will qualify for the approval mark.

End Article